Theological Discussions at The

David Clarke

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS AT THE MONK'S REST

David Clarke

INTRODUCTION

Theological Discussions at the Monks Rest

For the past two years, four of us have gathered every Monday morning for coffee at The Monks Rest, where we have always been warmly welcomed.

The Coffee Table

Our conversations have ranged widely — from religion and theology to politics and current affairs. Each of us comes from a different walk of life, with varied vocational and academic backgrounds, and our views on matters of faith are shaped by the breadth of our life experience, having now reached our middle to late seventies.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Amanda for her kind hospitality and the warm welcome she has continually extended to us.

For those interested in exploring more of the themes and reflections that have arisen from our discussions, please see the list of Further Publications at the back of this book.

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A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY , by Dr. John Gill, Edited by David Clarke

BOOK II, OF THE ACTS AND WORKS OF GOD

CHAPTER 1
Of the Internal Acts and Works of God, and of His Decrees in General

Now that we've looked at who God is — his nature, his perfections, and the mystery of the three Persons within the one divine Being — we can turn to what God actually does. These are his acts and operations, which naturally flow from who he is. Since God possesses every perfection imaginable, everything he does must be perfectly wise, just, and good, and therefore worth our attention.

The old theologians used to describe God as actus purus et simplicissimus — that is, pure and simple act, meaning that in God there is no passivity, no waiting or potentiality. He is not acted upon by anything outside himself. He is, if we can put it this way, pure activity — always working, always willing, always sustaining. As Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Notice that Christ didn't say when the Father began his work — only that he had been working up to that very moment. God didn't start working at creation; his active, eternal mind has always been at work. From eternity he has been thinking, designing, and determining all that would come to pass in time.

Even before creation, the three divine Persons — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — delighted infinitely in one another. And they also delighted in the foresight of what each would do in time to reveal their glory: the Father purposing redemption, the Son undertaking it, and the Spirit applying it.

God's acts can be grouped into two kinds: internal and external.

The external works of God are those that happen in time and can be seen or known by us — creation, providence, redemption, and so on.

The internal works of God — which we'll look at first — are those of eternity, the secret workings of the divine mind before anything existed.

These internal works are often divided into personal and essential acts.

Personal acts are those which belong distinctly to each divine Person and mark the difference between them — these we've already discussed when speaking of the Trinity.

Essential acts are those shared equally by all three, since they possess one and the same divine nature. So, they share one understanding, one will, and one set of divine affections. What the Father knows, the Son and Spirit know; what the Father loves, they love; what the Father wills, they will.

Among these eternal acts of God's mind are his purposes and decrees — what the Apostle Paul calls things "purposed in himself" (Ephesians 1:9). Whatever is true of one divine purpose is true of all: they are eternal, unchanging, and entirely within God.

That God has such decrees is beyond question. They cover not only the matters of grace and salvation but the entire order of providence — everything that happens in heaven and earth (see Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 14:24, 27). Scripture gives these divine determinations several names:

"The thoughts of his heart."
These are called "the deep things of God," lying hidden in the secret chambers of his eternal mind. Only God himself knows them fully, and they are revealed by his Spirit — just as a man's inner thoughts are known only to his own spirit (Psalm 33:11; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

"The counsels of God."
These are said to be "of old," that is, eternal, and they are described as "faithfulness and truth" (Isaiah 25:1) because they are carried out faithfully and truly in time. The word "counsel" here doesn't suggest that God was ever uncertain, or that he had to consult anyone about what to do. Rather, it's a human way of saying that his decrees are formed with infinite wisdom and executed with perfect success — just as, among men, plans made after careful thought are usually the most sound.

"Decrees."
This is the term we most often use. A decree is simply a settled decision

— what God has fixed and determined in his own mind (see Daniel 4:17; Zephaniah 2:2). The "determinate counsel of God" mentioned in Acts 2:23 is an example of this.

"Foreordination" or "Predestination."
For instance, Christ is said to have been "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). Likewise, believers are said to be "predestinated unto the adoption of children" and "to an inheritance" (Ephesians 1:5, 11). This simply means that, long before time began, God appointed these things to be so in his divine plan.

"The will" and "good pleasure" of God.
Scripture often sums up God's decrees in these terms — "the counsel of his will" or "his good pleasure" (Romans 9:19; Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 46:10). They express that everything God purposes flows from his own free and holy delight.

In short, God's decrees are the eternal, wise, and unchangeable decisions of his mind, determining everything that will ever come to pass — all formed in perfect harmony with his character and for the glory of his name.

The Internal Acts and Works of God, and His Decrees in General

1. That there are decrees and purposes in God

First of all, let us see that such decrees truly exist — not just vague "ideas" about future events, but fixed and deliberate determinations of what shall come to pass. This can be clearly seen from what we already know of God's own nature.

God is Spirit — uncreated, infinite, active, and self-existent. Earlier we said he is pure act (that is, there is nothing idle or potential in him). His eternal mind has always been busy within itself. Just as a human mind is never completely empty — it always has its thoughts, intentions, and choices — so God has never been without the thoughts of his heart, the acts of his understanding, and the decisions (or volitions) of his will.

Now, consider God's sovereignty — his absolute rule over everything. If anything could happen without God's will, or even against it, then he would not truly be sovereign. Scripture says, "Who is he that saith, and it

cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lamentations 3:37). Likewise, if anything occurred merely by chance or fortune, independent of God's will, or if he had to adjust his actions according to the choices of men, he would be dependent upon them — which cannot be said of the Almighty. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things (Romans 11:36).

Next, think of God's immutability, meaning that he never changes. If events could arise in time that God had not already foreseen and willed from eternity, that would introduce something new into his knowledge or purpose — implying change. Or if God were to form a new decision after time began, that would likewise mean change. Yet Scripture declares, "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His decrees therefore must be eternal and unchangeable.

The knowledge of God also proves his decrees. He is the God of knowledge who weighs all actions (1 Samuel 2:3). He knows everything that happens, and his knowledge is not gathered bit by bit as events occur; rather, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). In other words, he knows what will be because he has already determined that it shall be.

Finally, the wisdom of God requires that he have eternal purposes. God is infinitely wise and does all things in wisdom. No wise builder begins a work without first planning what he means to build, of what materials, and for what end. Shall we imagine, then, that the all-wise Creator would act without prior purpose? Scripture calls him "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isaiah 28:29); the one implies eternal design, the other perfect execution.

2. The extent of God's decrees

Secondly, consider how far these divine purposes reach. They extend to all things that ever happen, from the world's beginning to its end.

Creation itself was according to his will: "For thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

The heavens — their making, stability, and even their final passing away to make room for new heavens — all stand by decree (Psalm 148:6).

The earth — from its form before the Flood to its present state and final destruction — continues by the word and purpose of God (2 Peter 3:5-7).

The sea — its appointed basin and its boundary of sand, beyond which its waves may not pass — is held in place by an everlasting decree (Job 38:10-11; Proverbs 8:29).

Even rain has its decree. Not a single shower falls apart from his will — whether to bless the earth or to chastise it (Job 28:26; Amos 4:7-8).

The same is true of nations and empires. Their rise, progress, and fall — from the mightiest kingdoms to the smallest provinces — are all fixed by God's purpose (Deuteronomy 32:8; Daniel 2:38-44). Israel's own story proves it: their descent from Abraham, their slavery in Egypt, their inheritance in Canaan, their kings, captivities, destruction, and even their promised restoration — all were predetermined (Genesis 15:14; Daniel 9:26-27; Romans 11:25-26).

The Church, too, moves entirely by divine appointment:

Under the Law, it lived in childhood, "under tutors and governors" (Galatians 4:1-2);

Under the Gospel, in "the time of reformation," it came of age.
Even the Church's persecutions under the Roman emperors — the "ten days" of trial (Revelation 2:10) — and its long struggle under the Papal system — the "time, times, and half a time" (Revelation 12:14) — were all fixed in God's calendar. When that appointed time ends, the angel will swear that "time shall be no longer" (Revelation 10:6). Likewise, the coming glory of the Church has its set time (Psalm 102:13; Isaiah 60).

Nor is divine determination limited to nations or ages; it reaches every individual life. When a person is born, where he lives, his opportunities, wealth or poverty, health or sickness, and even the moment of his death — all are within God's "determinate counsel" (Acts 17:26; Job 14:5; Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

All that concerns God's people — their election, redemption, calling, afflictions, and deliverances — is equally fixed. Even the eternal destinies of the

righteous and the wicked are settled in advance, though we shall treat that more fully when we come to the special decrees concerning rational creatures.

Above all, everything relating to Christ himself — his coming into the world at the appointed time (Galatians 4:4), all that he did and suffered (Acts 4:28) — was exactly as "the hand and counsel of God had before determined."

In short, everything that happens — great or small, good or evil — is foreordained. Good things are carried out by God's effective decrees (his active will to accomplish them). Evil things fall under his permissive decrees (his decision to allow them for wise and holy ends). Even seemingly accidental events — like the free actions of men — are under his control, as shown when he foretold by name both Josiah and Cyrus centuries before they were born. Nothing is too small: the hairs of our heads are numbered, and not even a sparrow falls without our Father's will (Matthew 10:29-30).

3. The properties of God's decrees

Thirdly, notice the qualities or properties of these divine purposes.

They are internal and immanent.
God's decrees exist within him; they are not external acts until they are brought to pass. While they remain within the divine mind, they put nothing into being. When they are executed, they become transient acts (that is, acts which move outward upon their objects). Until then, they are secrets known only to God.

They are eternal.
As God himself is from everlasting to everlasting, so are his decrees. Some divines put it this way: God's decrees are God decreeing. If his knowledge of all his works is eternal, then his decisions about them must be eternal too. Election, for instance, took place "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4); therefore all his decrees are of the same eternal date — for no new will can arise in God in time.

They are free.
God's decrees are acts of his own free will, uninfluenced by anything outside himself. When he says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have

mercy" (Romans 9:15), he means that he exercises mercy freely. He hides the gospel from some and reveals it to others "as seems good in his sight" (Matthew 11:26). Having once decreed, the fulfilment is necessary; but the making of the decree was perfectly free.

They are wise.
Because God is infinitely wise, his decrees are laid in perfect wisdom. We may not always see the reasoning, yet we can say with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33).

They are immutable.
God's purposes never change. The prophet Zechariah pictured them as mountains of brass (Zechariah 6:1-8) — immovable and unbreakable. Even the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be altered once sealed; how much more the eternal counsel of God, which is unchangeable (Hebrews 6:17). His purposes are the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

They are effectual.
God's decrees always achieve their end. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isaiah 14:27). Men's plans often fail through lack of foresight or power, but God's cannot fail. He sees all things from beginning to end and possesses infinite power to perform his will. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" (Job 23:13). His counsel stands, and he does all his pleasure (Isaiah 46:10).

Finally, the end of all God's decrees is his own glory. "The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Proverbs 16:4). Though his creatures' good is included as a subordinate aim, the ultimate purpose behind everything — creation, providence, salvation, and judgment — is the honour of his great name.

CHAPTER 2

Of the Special Decrees of God Relating to Rational Creatures — Angels and Men — and Particularly of Election

Now we come to what are often called the special decrees of God — those which concern rational creatures, meaning angels and men. These decrees are usually summed up under the term predestination.

What is Predestination?

Sometimes predestination is taken in a broad sense — to mean everything that God has predetermined from eternity. In that sense, it includes all that we have already spoken of in the previous chapter — what some divines call eternal providence. Temporary providence (that is, what happens in time) is simply the outworking of that eternal plan.

For God not only foresees what will happen; he has also foreordained the certain means by which it will happen. His counsel and will are the source of all things, the standard by which he works: "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

But the word predestination is most often used in a narrower sense, to include two particular branches — election and reprobation — and these apply both to angels and to men.

Among angels, some are called "elect angels" (1 Timothy 5:21), while others are said to be "reserved in chains" — that is, held under God's judicial restraint — "unto the judgment of the great day" (2 Peter 2:4).

Among men, some are described as "vessels of mercy", prepared beforehand for glory, and others as "vessels of wrath", fitted for destruction (Romans 9:22–23). Some are the elect who obtain salvation, while the rest are left in blindness (Romans 11:7).

Sometimes the term predestination refers only to the elect. For who are those that God calls, justifies, and glorifies (Romans 8:29–30)? Not the reprobate, surely, but those chosen in Christ to be adopted as sons and heirs (Ephesians 1:5, 11).

We therefore begin with the first branch — election — considering first the election of angels, and then the election of men.

I. The Election of Angels

Scripture says little on this subject, so we must not say too much. Yet it is clear that some angels are elect, and that their election has several points of resemblance to that of men, though with some differences.

Their election, like ours, is of God.
God himself is the cause of it. He chose them and set them apart for eternal blessedness. Hence they are called "the angels of God" (Luke 12:8–9) — not merely because he created them (for he created the fallen angels too), but because these are his chosen ones, his favourites, appointed to enjoy everlasting happiness in his presence.

Their election involves distinction and separation.
As the elect among men are separated from the world, so the elect angels are distinguished from the rest of their order. The one group are holy angels, the others are angels that sinned. The elect angels were preserved from apostasy — that is, from falling away — and confirmed in their original state of holiness. The rest were left to fall and are now kept under judgment.

They were chosen while in an equal state.
When God elected them, all angels stood on equal ground — none had yet fallen or done evil. Just as human election took place "before they had done either good or evil," so the angels were chosen out of what the old writers called the pure mass of creature-ship — all alike as newly created beings. Their preservation in holiness and confirmation by grace came as a result of their election, not as its cause. Thus the difference between those who stood and those who fell rests entirely on the sovereign will of God.

Their election is in Christ — though not as Redeemer.
The Scriptures do not say the angels were chosen in Christ in the same sense that men are. They needed no mediator, for they never sinned. Yet Christ may still be regarded as their Head of conservation — that is, the one appointed to rule over them, to preserve them in their state, and to communicate sustaining grace. Hence we read that Christ is "the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10).

They were chosen to happiness, not salvation from sin.
Angels never needed saving, for they never fell into guilt or misery. Yet they were elected to a state of unchangeable holiness and eternal joy — to behold the face of God continually, to enjoy his presence for ever, and to share in the glory and fellowship of the redeemed.

II. The Election of Men

Next comes the election of men to grace and glory. But before we consider the elect themselves, we must first note that even Christ, as man and Mediator, is called God's elect — the first and chief of all the chosen.

1. The Election of Christ

Scripture speaks of him in this way: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42:1). He is the "chosen of God, and precious" (1 Peter 2:4), though rejected by men.

This title of elect given to Christ has two aspects:

The choice of his human nature for union with the Son of God.
Before the world began, God appointed that a particular human nature would be joined to the divine Word. As the Psalmist wrote, "In thy book all my members were written" (Psalm 139:16) — meaning that even the body prepared for Christ (Hebrews 10:5) was foreordained. Among all the possible human beings conceived in the divine mind, this one was chosen to be united with the second Person of the Trinity. Hence it was sanctified, set apart, and filled with the Spirit beyond measure (Hebrews 1:9; John 3:34). No angel ever received such honour.

The choice of him to his mediatorial office.
Christ was chosen to be the Mediator between God and man — to stand as the appointed Head and Saviour of his people. He was "set up from everlasting" (Proverbs 8:23) and foreordained as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:19–20). Thus, as believers are chosen in him, he himself was first chosen to be their Redeemer. God "laid help upon one that is mighty," appointing him to make atonement, to satisfy divine justice, and to bring salvation to his people (Romans 3:25). He is also appointed the Judge of all — "to judge the quick and the dead" (Acts 10:42; 17:31).

But having noted Christ's election, let us now focus on what Scripture speaks of most fully — the election of men in Christ unto eternal life.

2. The Doctrine of Election Should Be Taught

Some object that this doctrine should not be preached or discussed. They claim it is a secret that belongs to God, that it disturbs people's assurance, or that it might lead others into careless living — saying, "If I'm elected, I'll

be saved anyway."

But such objections are baseless.

Election is not a secret. It is plainly revealed in Scripture — written, as one has said, "with sunbeams." What is secret is which particular individuals are elect; that, indeed, God alone knows until grace reveals it.

Nor does this doctrine lead true believers into despair. For those in whom the gospel has come "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5), election is a source of comfort, not confusion. If one can say, "I am born again; I am called by God's grace," then his election is beyond question.

Nor does it encourage sin. People are chosen to be holy (Ephesians 1:4). Election secures holiness as surely as it secures salvation. To claim that it promotes sin is to misunderstand it entirely.

The real question for anyone is not, "Am I elect?" but, "Am I born again? Has grace changed me?" Once that is settled, election follows as certain fruit.

Hence, believers have every reason for gratitude and joy. The Apostle thanked God for the Thessalonians' election (2 Thessalonians 2:13), and blessed God for his own (Ephesians 1:3–4). Paul triumphantly asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Romans 8:33). Christ himself told his disciples to rejoice, not merely in their spiritual gifts, but because their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

As the seventeenth Article of the Church of England rightly puts it, this doctrine is "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons."

And as for the charge of promoting licentiousness — well, what truth is there that a wicked man cannot twist? Men even abuse the patience of God to justify their sin. But the doctrine itself, rightly understood, is the very source of holiness and thankfulness. Therefore, far from hiding it, we should proclaim it — for it humbles man, magnifies grace, and honours God.

The Scriptural Language of Election

Let's first look at the phrases that Scripture uses when speaking of this doctrine. These show us what the words election and elect truly mean.

1. Ordained to Eternal Life

In Acts 13:48 we read, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This word ordained means predestined, appointed, or determined by God for everlasting life through Jesus Christ.

From this one verse we learn several things:

It refers to particular persons—some, not all, though many.

It refers not to temporary blessings but to grace and glory—to eternal salvation itself.

Faith is not the cause of election but the fruit of it. Those whom God has ordained to life will certainly come to faith; both their believing and their receiving eternal life are guaranteed by this divine act of grace.

Some have tried to weaken the meaning by translating the phrase as, "as many as were disposed for eternal life believed." But this doesn't fit the way the word is used anywhere else in Acts. There it always means determined or appointed—as in Acts 15:2, 22:10, and 28:23. The Latin and early English versions likewise render it pre-ordained.

Besides, before faith there can be no good disposition toward eternal life in anyone. Scripture says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Men in their natural state are "foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3); they are "without hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Even if one speaks of a desire for eternal life, such desire may exist without faith, as in the rich young ruler who asked what he must do to inherit it but went away sorrowful when told to follow Christ (Matthew 19:16–22).

Likewise, a respectful hearing of the Word is no proof of good disposition. Many listened to Jesus gladly yet did not believe his message (Isaiah 53:1); indeed, some who had heard him attentively were soon shouting, "Crucify

him!" (Luke 23:18–21). If any people could have been thought "disposed" to receive eternal life, surely it would have been the devout Jews who knew the Scriptures, not the ignorant Gentiles. Yet it was the Gentiles who rejoiced and believed, while the Jews opposed and persecuted the apostles. Therefore the faith of those Gentile believers did not arise from natural inclination but from God's sovereign ordination.

2. Written in Heaven – the Book of Life

This same eternal act of God is also pictured as people's names being written in heaven, in what Scripture calls "the book of life," or more particularly "the Lamb's book of life" (Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8).

It is called the Lamb's book because Christ's own name stands first in it, and because he was present at its writing and is the one by whom that eternal life is secured. This image teaches us that:

Election is an act of God in heaven, concerning the everlasting happiness of men.

It relates to specific persons, known individually to God.

It is certain and permanent—for what is written in heaven cannot be erased.

3. Chosen and Elect

Most often the Scriptures simply speak of God's people as "chosen" or "elect." They are called "God's elect," "the election," or "the chosen" (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:33; 11:7). These words plainly mean that only some and not all are the objects of this grace. Jesus himself said, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18). Where everything and everyone is included, there is no choice; if some are chosen, others are left. Hence Christ said, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 20:16). The chosen are called "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5), and those not chosen are called "the rest."

4. What Election Is Not

This election is not merely the selection of a nation for outward privileges. Israel, for instance, was chosen as a people to receive certain external benefits—
the land of Canaan, the Law, the temple worship, and the promises (Romans 9:4–5).
But even among Israel, "they are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6).
Not all were God's spiritual people, nor all adopted children of grace.
Only a remnant within the nation were elected to eternal salvation; had God not preserved that remnant, Israel would have perished like Sodom and Gomorrah (Romans 9:27, 29).

In the same way, our own nation may be richly blessed with gospel light and the means of grace; yet it would be folly to imagine that every individual is thereby elect to eternal glory. Outward privilege is not the same as inward calling.

What Election Is Not, and What It Truly Is

We've already seen that election in Scripture does not mean a general choice of all mankind, nor merely a choice to outward privileges. Let's now go further and rule out a few more misunderstandings before describing what true election really is.

1. Not an Election to Office

This doctrine does not refer to people being appointed to public or religious offices — such as the sons of Aaron being chosen to serve as priests, Saul being chosen as king of Israel, or the twelve apostles being chosen by Christ.

These were appointments to service, not to salvation. Many priests were wicked men. Saul was chosen to reign but behaved so badly that God rejected him — not from salvation, but from continuing in the kingdom. Even among the apostles, one was "a devil" (John 6:70). So election to office — even to the highest offices — is one thing; election to eternal life is quite another.

2. Not the Election of Entire Churches or Nations

Some have imagined that texts like Ephesians 1:4 ("chosen in Christ") refer to whole churches or communities being chosen to enjoy gospel privileges. But that cannot be.

For one thing, the letter to the Ephesians was not addressed to a church body alone, but to "the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" — individual believers. And Paul includes himself and others among those "chosen in Christ," showing it refers to persons, not institutions.

The phrase "chosen in Christ" can even apply to a single believer (see Romans 16:13), and it clearly speaks not of outward advantages but of holiness and eternal glory.

The same applies to the Colossians, called "the elect of God" (Colossians 3:12). This description, too, refers not to their church status but to their faith in Christ — the evidence and fruit of their election. Likewise, the Thessalonians were said to "know their election of God" because the gospel came to them "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5). Their election, therefore, was not to mere outward means but "to salvation" and "the obtaining of the glory of Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Peter speaks similarly when he addresses believers scattered abroad — "strangers," not one gathered church — calling them "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). That clearly refers to saving grace, not external privilege.

3. Not the Same as Effectual Calling

Election must also not be confused with calling, though the two are closely related.
Sometimes Scripture describes calling in words that sound similar — believers are said to be "chosen out of the world" (John 15:19) and God is said to have "chosen the foolish things of the world" (1 Corinthians 1:27). But in such cases choosing means calling.

Effectual calling is the fruit and evidence of election — the result, not the cause.
As Paul says, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Romans

8:30). Election is the tree; calling is its fruit. Election is the foundation; calling is the building raised upon it.

4. What Election Is

Now positively: the election we are speaking of is God's eternal choice of certain individuals to grace and glory.

It is an act of pure divine good pleasure, by which God, before the world existed, chose some persons to holiness and happiness — to salvation through Christ, to share his glory, and to inherit eternal life as the free gift of God (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 13:48).

This is the first and foundational blessing, the fountain from which all other blessings flow. For this reason Paul sets it at the head of his list in Ephesians 1:3–4, and it stands as the first link in the golden chain of salvation in Romans 8:30 —

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate … and whom he predestinated, them he also called, and justified, and glorified."

Secondly: By Whom and In Whom Election Is Made

Election is made by God and made in Christ.

1. Made by God

God himself is the efficient cause — the one who acts.
As the supreme sovereign of heaven and earth, he has every right to do as he pleases with his own. Kings appoint their ministers; masters choose their servants; every man selects his friends and companions. Shall not God, the Lord of all, choose whom he will to share communion with himself, both now and forever?

Scripture therefore calls this "the election of God" (1 Thessalonians 1:4), and believers are "God's elect" (Romans 8:33; Luke 18:7).

This act of election is most often attributed to God the Father — "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He both "blesses" and "chooses" in Christ, "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:3–4). Peter

echoes the same: believers are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). Notice how the Father is distinguished from both the Spirit, through whose work the elect are sanctified, and from Jesus Christ, whose blood seals their salvation.

Sometimes election is also ascribed to Christ himself. He said, "I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18). This cannot refer merely to his choice of the twelve as apostles, for one of them — Judas — was lost. It must mean his choosing them to eternal life. Thus the chosen are called Christ's elect, not only because they were chosen in him and given to him, but because they were chosen by him. He said of himself: "The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds" (Matthew 24:30–31).

Nor is the Holy Spirit excluded from this work. Though the Father decrees the end and the Son secures it, the Spirit applies it and brings it about in time. Since he takes part in every stage of salvation, he must also share in the eternal counsel that designed it. Father, Son, and Spirit act together as one God in this choice of grace.

And because this act is of God, it is for ever.
Human favour shifts and fades; men may choose companions today and reject them tomorrow. But "God is in one mind, and who can turn him?" (Job 23:13). His purpose, "according to election," stands firm and unchangeable. What he once decreed he never revokes.

Election Made in Christ — Its Objects — and the Order of God's Decrees

1. Election Made in Christ

Paul says, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

This means that election does not find people already "in Christ," but rather places them there. It is election itself that gives the elect their secret, spiritual union with Christ — a union established from eternity, which later becomes visible and experiential when they are converted.

When a person comes to faith and becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), that visible change is the outward evidence of an eternal reality. His conversion in time proves his election before time. The one union is temporal and experienced; the other is eternal and hidden — but they are inseparably linked.

Paul illustrates this when he says, "I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago" (2 Corinthians 12:2), speaking of himself. He means that about fourteen years earlier he had been called and converted, and thus openly united to Christ. Yet that union existed in God's purpose long before. Similarly, he greets Andronicus and Junia as those who "were in Christ before me" (Romans 16:7) — meaning they were converted earlier, not that their election preceded his. For in the eternal decree, all the elect were chosen together in Christ, as one body under one Head.

To be chosen in Christ does not mean chosen for the sake of Christ, as though his future obedience or death were the cause of election. Scripture teaches the reverse: Christ's redeeming work is the result of election, not the reason for it.

The Father did not choose us because Christ died for us; rather, Christ died for us because the Father had chosen us. As Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15). His sheep — the same as the elect — were his before he died for them. His sacrifice did not make them sheep; it was because they were already his sheep, chosen and given to him by the Father, that he died for them.

Christ himself is also the object of divine election — "Behold my servant, mine elect" (Isaiah 42:1) — "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). As God the Son, he is the author of election; as Mediator, he is the executor of it. Men are chosen in him as their Head, just as members are chosen with their body. He and they are chosen together in the same eternal decree — they given to him, and he given to them.

They are thus placed in his hands and preserved in him (Jude 1). From this union flows every blessing of grace: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). They are first of God in Christ by electing grace; then through Christ they receive every spiritual benefit they need.

2. The Objects of Election

The objects of this election are men, not angels (who have already been considered), and not men as possessing certain qualities — such as being already believers, holy, or persevering — but men as persons, simply as they are in God's eternal view.

We are not chosen because we are holy, but rather we are made holy because we are chosen (Ephesians 1:4). Election is the root; faith, holiness, and perseverance are its fruits.

If men were not elect until they had persevered in holiness to the end, election would be pointless — for by that time they would already be in glory and would have no need to be chosen to it! God does not choose propositions (such as "whoever believes shall be saved"), but persons.

Election therefore distinguishes some men from others — as calling does in time. Just as in effectual calling men are drawn out of the world and separated from their former ways, so in election they are set apart from eternity. The same people who are the subjects of redemption are those who are the subjects of election: "Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9). The two acts are coextensive — redemption reaches exactly as far as election, neither more nor less.

The elect are called "vessels of mercy," in contrast to the rest, who are "vessels of wrath" (Romans 9:22–23). They are "a seed", "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5). Others, "the rest," are left to blindness and unbelief. While some are "given up to believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12), others, "beloved of the Lord," are "chosen from the beginning to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Not all men share in the means or the end of election. Not all are sanctified by the Spirit, not all believe in Christ, not all enter into eternal life. Scripture is plain: some go into everlasting punishment, others into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).

The number of the elect is not limited to one nation. God is "the God of the Jews and also of the Gentiles." The chosen are drawn from every people, yet they are mostly the poor of this world, despised by its standards (James

2:5). In comparison with the multitudes of the ungodly, they are few — "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 20:16). They are Christ's little flock to whom the Father gives the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Luke 12:32). Yet viewed by themselves, they are an innumerable company — "a great multitude which no man could number" (Revelation 7:9).

3. Were the Elect Considered Fallen or Unfallen?

This leads naturally to a classic question: In God's eternal decree, were men viewed as fallen or unfallen — as sinners already, or merely as creatures to be created?

Those who hold that God viewed mankind as unfallen are called Supralapsarians (from supra lapsum, "before the fall"). Within this view, some believe man was considered as creatable — not yet created; others, as created but not yet fallen.

The first of these opinions seems most consistent. It teaches that, in God's eternal mind, he conceived the countless individuals he could create by his power. Of those, he determined to bring some into being and to glorify himself through them in various ways.

The decrees of God may be seen in two aspects — the decree of the end and the decree of the means.

The end is God's ultimate purpose: his own glory, especially in the salvation of some and the righteous judgment of others.

The means include all that leads to that end: creation, the permission of the fall, redemption through Christ, sanctification by the Spirit, and final glorification.

These are not many separate decrees but one complete and harmonious plan — a single, perfect design. It is not that God first decreed to create man in order that he might fall, or decreed the fall in order that he might redeem; but that he decreed all together, that through all these stages he might display the glory of his grace, mercy, and justice.

In this way, Supralapsarians believe they answer a common misunder-

standing — the charge that their view makes God the author of damnation, as though he created man only to destroy him. Not so. They maintain that God made man not merely to save or condemn him, but to glorify himself, which he does in both the redeemed and the lost.

They reason that the end is always first in intention and last in execution. Since the glory of God is the final end in execution, it must be the first in intention. Therefore, in the divine purpose, man must have been considered as not yet created or fallen when God determined that end; for creation and the fall belong to the decree of the means, which follow in logical order.

They also argue that if God had first decreed to create and allow the fall, and only then decided whom to save, he would have decreed creation without an end in view, which would contradict divine wisdom. No wise builder lays a foundation without planning the finished house; so it cannot be thought that the all-wise God acted without first intending the ultimate end — his own glory (Proverbs 16:4).

This understanding, they believe, best upholds the sovereignty of God as set forth in Romans 9. There, Paul represents God as freely willing and determining, not because of any foreseen merit in the creature, but simply because it is his will. Hence the objection, "Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will?" (Romans 9:19). And the apostle answers by appealing to divine sovereignty: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20). The image of the potter and the clay fits this perfectly — "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:21).

This argument, they say, agrees better with the case of Jacob and Esau — "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11). If mankind were viewed as already fallen, then all would be equally corrupt and fit only for dishonour; in that case, the text would have said that some were left in dishonour while others were raised from it. But Paul speaks of unformed clay — of mankind as yet uncreated and unfallen — from which God freely makes vessels for honour and dishonour.

They also note that elect angels must have been chosen in the pure mass

of creaturehood, since they never fell. It is therefore reasonable that men, likewise, were considered in the same pure state in the divine mind.

And they point to the human nature of Christ — itself the object of election to a dignity far above angels or men. This nature never fell, was never corrupt, and yet is said to be "chosen out of the people" (Psalm 89:19). Therefore, the people from whom it was chosen must also have been considered as not yet fallen.

Such are the main lines of argument used by those who hold this view of God's eternal order.

The Sublapsarian View, Their Arguments, and the Unity of the Doctrine

1. The Sublapsarian Position

On the other side stand those called Sublapsarians (sub lapsum, meaning "after the fall").
They hold that, in God's eternal purpose, men were considered as already created and fallen when he chose some to salvation.

They appeal to Christ's words, "I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:19).
Since "the world" is described in Scripture as lying in wickedness, under the power of the evil one, filled with corruption, they argue that those chosen out of it must themselves have been sinners.

But this text really speaks of effectual calling—when men are actually separated from the sinful world by the gospel—not of eternal election, which was long before.

They also note that the elect are called "vessels of mercy" (Romans 9:23). This, they say, implies that they were once miserable and guilty, and therefore considered fallen when chosen.
It's true that every blessing they receive—redemption through Christ, forgiveness, regeneration, salvation—is due to divine mercy. Yet that does not prove they were viewed as needing mercy when chosen. They are called "vessels of mercy" because mercy brings them to glory, not because misery was the reason they were selected.

They further argue that since believers are "chosen in Christ" as Mediator and Redeemer, this implies sin and reconciliation, and therefore that men must have been considered fallen.
Granted, election in Christ presupposes redemption and atonement; yet Christ's mediatorship is not the cause of election but the means by which the elect are brought to the salvation they were chosen to enjoy.

It is also said that in Scripture the line of thought (the transitus, or natural progression) moves not from election to creation, but from election to calling, justification, sanctification, and glory.
That is true—but calling presupposes creation, so it cannot disprove the Supralapsarian order.

2. Their Broader Rationale

Sublapsarians often present their view as the more moderate one and believe it best displays God's justice.
Since all mankind lies in a fallen, guilty state, they reason that God cannot be unjust in showing mercy to some while leaving others to perish for their sins.
All deserve wrath; therefore, to choose some for salvation and leave others to just condemnation cannot be unfair.

Yet the Supralapsarians reply that there is equally no injustice in God's choosing some out of the pure mass of possible creatures and passing by others, if all alike exist solely for his glory.
Both sides are simply reasoning from different starting points—one from man's misery, the other from God's sovereignty.

3. Their Common Ground

The difference between the two views, though often debated sharply, is smaller than it seems.
Both Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians agree on every essential point of the doctrine of election:

That election is personal and particular.
It concerns individuals whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, not groups or abstractions.

That it is absolute and unconditional.
It depends on no act or will of man, nor on anything foreseen in the creature.

That it rests wholly on the sovereign will and pleasure of God.
Faith, holiness, or good works are not the cause but the result of election.

That both the elect and the non-elect were considered equally.

Whether viewed as fallen or unfallen, both were on the same footing—nothing in one distinguishing him from another until God made the distinction by his own will.

That election is eternal, not temporal.
Even Sublapsarians do not suppose that God decreed after creation and the fall, but that he eternally viewed mankind as if already fallen when forming his decree.

Thus, though they differ in how they arrange the order of God's decrees in their logical sequence, they agree in the substance of the doctrine and should not accuse one another of error or heresy.

Calvin himself leaned toward the Sublapsarian (or "corrupt mass") view; his successor Beza held the Supralapsarian. Yet they lived and ministered together in harmony at Geneva.

When the Arminian controversy arose in Holland, the Contra-Remonstrants (the orthodox Calvinists) were divided on this point—some for one side, some for the other—but they stood united against the common opponent, Arminianism.

Dr Twiss, perhaps the most thorough Supralapsarian that ever wrote, admitted that the whole issue was merely apex logicus—a "logical peak," a technical point about how to order God's decrees, not a matter of faith.

And, as Gill wisely concludes, both aspects can be taken together.
In the decree of the end—that is, God's ultimate design for his own glory—men may be viewed as creatable, not yet made or fallen.
In the decree of the means—which includes the mediation of Christ, redemption, and sanctification—they may be viewed as created and fallen,

for those means presuppose sin.

This does not mean that there are separate or successive acts in God, for all his decrees are one single, eternal act.
But our finite minds cannot grasp that unity all at once, and so we are forced to think of it step by step.

4. The Date of Election — Its Eternity

Having seen its nature, we now consider its timing.
Scripture plainly teaches that election took place before men were born.
Paul writes of Jacob and Esau, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Romans 9:11).

If God could appoint Jeremiah a prophet before his birth—"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth I sanctified thee" (Jeremiah 1:5)—surely he could choose men to grace and glory just as early.

Election is also before the new birth or conversion, for calling and regeneration are the results of it.
Paul says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
This "beginning" cannot mean the start of gospel preaching among them, for the gospel often comes to people without saving effect (Hebrews 4:2).
Nor does it mean the beginning of their personal faith, since calling and faith are fruits of election—"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Romans 8:30).

The phrase "from the beginning" therefore denotes eternity itself—as in Proverbs 8:23, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."
So the Thessalonian text means that their choice to salvation was from everlasting.

Indeed, Paul states it outright: "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).
And Revelation declares that the book of life of the Lamb—in which the names of the elect are written—was written "from the foundation of the

world" (Revelation 13:8; 17:8).

Hence election is an eternal act, grounded in the timeless will of God.
It existed before time began, before the creation of the world, before the appearance of sin—an act as ancient as God himself, yet revealed in time through the gospel and the calling of his people.

The Eternity and Free Grace of God's Election

1. Election Is Eternal — Its Proofs

(1) From the Foreknowledge of God
God's foreknowledge is eternal. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).
He has always known every person and every event. Nothing arises in time that was ever unknown to him.

Now Scripture says that men are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Peter 1:2), and that "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate" (Romans 8:29).
Therefore, if his foreknowledge is eternal, the choice based upon it must also be eternal.

But this foreknowledge is not a bare awareness of future facts; it carries love and affection toward the persons known. God's foreknowledge of his elect is a loving, approving knowledge — he "knew" them as a father knows his children, not merely as one might know a list of names.

(2) From the Love of God
Election springs out of God's eternal love. "Electio praesupponit dilectionem" — election presupposes love.
Paul first calls the Thessalonians "beloved of the Lord," then says that God "hath chosen" them to salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
So election is the immediate fruit of divine love and inseparably joined to it.

When God says, "Jacob have I loved" (Romans 9:13), he means a love that existed long before Jacob was born.
This love is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3): it not only endures forever but began before time began.

Christ himself testified that the Father loved him "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24); and in the same breath he says, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23).
If that love is eternal, so must the choice that flows from it be.

(3) From the Covenant of Grace
Election is bound up with the everlasting covenant — that gracious agreement made within the Godhead before the world existed.
This covenant, sometimes called "the covenant of redemption," is described as "ordered in all things and sure" (2 Samuel 23:5).
Its promises were "before the world began" (Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9).

In that covenant, Christ was appointed Mediator and Head, and promises of life and grace were made to those whom the Father had chosen in him.
If the covenant itself is eternal, then those embraced within it — the elect in Christ — must have been chosen just as early.
Hence Scripture says of Christ that his "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2), and of his people that they were "chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

(4) From the Early Preparation of Grace and Glory

Paul writes that "grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).
The elect were "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3–4) from the very start.

They were "afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23) — prepared in the purpose of God long before they existed in the flesh.

Christ calls the heavenly inheritance "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).
This preparation is nothing else than a predestination both of the glory for them and of them for that glory.

(5) From the Eternal Nature of All God's Decrees

If God's decrees in general are eternal — and they must be, since his foreknowledge depends on them and his immutability forbids any new decisions in time — then surely this most precious decree, concerning the

salvation of his people and the manifestation of his own glory, must also be eternal.

The entire plan of salvation in Christ — that "fellowship of the mystery" hidden in God — is "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:9–11).
That eternal purpose is nothing less than his purpose according to election.

2. The Moving Cause of Election — What It Was Not

Having seen when election took place, we now ask why it took place — what moved God to choose as he did.
And the answer is entirely negative with regard to anything in man.

(1) Not Good Works

Election occurred in eternity, "before the children were born, neither having done any good or evil" (Romans 9:11).
Therefore works could not possibly be its cause.

Good works are the fruit of election, not the root of it.
If God had not left a chosen remnant, all mankind would have become as Sodom and Gomorrah (Romans 9:29) — wholly corrupt and destroyed.
Those who perform truly good works do so because God has first chosen and renewed them.
Good works are said to be "prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10); hence both our election and the works prepared for us precede the works themselves.

Before effectual calling, men have only the appearance of good deeds; in reality, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).
No act can be truly good unless it springs from faith, love to God, and the indwelling grace of Christ — all of which are effects of calling, not its causes.

In every other act of grace, God also acts without respect to human works:

He sent his Son, not because we loved him but because "he loved us" (1 John 4:10).

He called us "not according to our works" (2 Timothy 1:9).

We are justified "without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

Salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

If election were based on works, it would no longer be of grace.
Paul settles the matter decisively: "If by grace, then is it no more of works… otherwise grace is no more grace" (Romans 11:5–6).

(2) Not Human Holiness

Neither inherent holiness (a gracious principle within) nor practical holiness (holy living) can be the cause of election.
Holiness is not the ground but the goal of being chosen.
"He hath chosen us in him… that we should be holy" (Ephesians 1:4).
It is something future, the intended result of election, not its reason.

Believers are chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit unto salvation" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
Therefore sanctification is part of the decree's design, not its motive.
It is itself decreed: "This is the will [that is, the decreeing will] of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
Holiness begins only at effectual calling, when the Spirit plants the principle of grace in the heart and enables the believer to live soberly and righteously.
Hence it cannot precede election.

(3) Not Faith
Faith arises in time; election is from eternity.
Before regeneration, all men are unbelievers — "without hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).
When they do believe, their faith is not from themselves but "the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8) — "the operation of God" (Colossians 2:12).
It therefore cannot be the cause of God's choice; rather, it is the effect and evidence of it.

Scripture could not be clearer: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).
Faith follows ordination; it does not precede it.

Those who do not believe, Christ says, "are not of my sheep" (John 10:26) — that is, they are not among the elect given to him by the Father.
Those who do believe believe precisely because they are his sheep, and faith is accordingly called "the faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1).

If faith were the cause of election, men could be said to have chosen Christ first — yet Christ himself said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).
Faith is our choice of Christ as Saviour, but it is made only because he first chose us.

(4) Not Perseverance
Nor does perseverance in faith and holiness move God to elect anyone.
On the contrary, perseverance is secured by election.
Christ's elect cannot finally fall away; "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).
They are the very people of whom Christ said that it was impossible the elect should be deceived (Matthew 24:24).

If someone argues that God foresaw their future perseverance and therefore chose them, the answer is simple:
God's foreknowledge of all future faith, holiness, and perseverance rests on his own decree to give these gifts.
He foresees because he has determined.
He knows that certain men will believe, be holy, and persevere, because he has determined to work faith and holiness in them by his grace.
This, in fact, is the doctrine we are asserting — a decree to bestow grace and glory for the sake of his own glory, and to withhold it from others.

(5) A Practical Illustration — Infants
The case of infants who die in infancy helps to make the point.
Multitudes of them pass out of this world almost as soon as they enter it.
Surely they are not created in vain; their existence must serve God's glory in some way.

Though Scripture does not reveal their specific election, charity inclines us to think well — that many, perhaps all, of such infants are chosen and saved by the pure mercy of God.
And if even one such infant be elect, that election plainly cannot rest on faith, holiness, or perseverance, which never appear in them.

Thus the cause of election must lie entirely in God's free and sovereign grace.

The Will, Means, Ends, and Blessings of Divine Election

1. The Sovereign Will of God — the Only Cause of Election

In short, these truths stand firm and beyond dispute:

Nothing that happens in time can be the cause of what was decreed in eternity.
Acts such as believing, being holy, doing good works, or persevering in faith take place within time. They therefore cannot be the reasons for an act of God formed before time began.

Nothing outside of God can move or influence his will.
God is not a passive Being, swayed by motives or forces beyond himself. Were anything outside of him to determine his will, that thing would be greater than God, which is impossible and irreverent even to suppose.

God's decrees arise solely from himself. He wills what he wills because it pleases him so to do.
Predestination is "according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5).
Election is "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2) — that is, according to his gracious favour and free goodwill.

Our Lord expressed it perfectly: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matthew 11:26).
That is the only final explanation for the mystery of divine choice.

2. The Means Fixed in the Decree of Election

Though election itself is an eternal act of grace, God has also fixed means in that decree to bring about its end.
The chief of these means are:

The mediation and redemption of Christ,

The sanctification of the Spirit, and

Faith — belief of the truth.

(1) The Mediation of Christ

Christ, as God, is the efficient cause of election; but as Mediator and Head, he is the appointed means through which the decree is fulfilled.
His blood, obedience, and death do not cause election, but they are the instruments by which the elect are brought to glory, and so the decree is accomplished.

Hence Peter says that believers are "elect… unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2).
These words describe not merely the result but also the means toward salvation.

Obedience may refer to Christ's obedience, both active (his perfect keeping of the law) and passive (his willing sufferings unto death).
By this obedience believers are justified and entitled to eternal life.

The sprinkling of his blood signifies the application of that atonement to the conscience.
The heart is thus cleansed from dead works and freed from guilt, producing peace, comfort, and joyful hope of glory.

Through Christ's mediation, both the justice and grace of God are glorified; mercy reigns, yet righteousness is satisfied.

(2) The Sanctification of the Spirit

Paul joins this with election: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
Sanctification — the inward work of grace begun at regeneration and perfected by the Spirit — is necessary to salvation, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Therefore it is fixed in the decree as a certain means to the appointed end.
The Spirit's work is just as sure as the salvation it leads to.
Hence the doctrine of election cannot be accused of promoting sin or carelessness; it is, in fact, a doctrine that guarantees holiness.

Election and sanctification stand or fall together — one secures the other.

(3) Belief of the Truth

Paul links faith to the same decree: "Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
This "belief of the truth" does not mean merely assenting to gospel facts — even devils believe those (James 2:19).
It means faith in Christ, the living Truth himself: a heartfelt trust that brings righteousness and life.

This faith is ordained as a means within the decree and therefore guaranteed by it.
Where God has elected, faith will certainly follow, for "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

3. The Ends of Election — Subordinate and Ultimate

The ends of election are both subordinate and ultimate.
The subordinate ends, though glorious in themselves, are still means toward the grand and final end — the glory of God.

(1) Subordinate Ends in Grace

Conformity to Christ:
God "predestinated [the elect] to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29).
This likeness refers chiefly to holiness. Man lost the image of God through sin; in regeneration it is restored, and at last perfected when believers see Christ as he is.
Thus Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren," the pattern and pre-eminent One among all who share his likeness.

Adoption as Sons:
"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (Ephesians 1:5).
This includes both the grace of adoption now and the inheritance that comes with it hereafter (Ephesians 1:11).

Holiness and Blamelessness:
They are "chosen… that [they] should be holy and without blame" (Ephe-

sians 1:4).
Holiness begins in this life and is completed in the next, when the church appears "without spot or wrinkle" before God.

Faith:
"God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith" (James 2:5).
They were not so when chosen, but they were chosen to be so; and the decree ensures its fulfilment — "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

Obedience and Good Works:
The elect are "elect… unto obedience" (1 Peter 1:2).
God has "before ordained that they should walk in good works" (Ephesians 2:10).
These fruits of grace are fixed in the purpose of God no less than salvation itself.

(2) Subordinate Ends in Glory

Salvation:
"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).
Salvation was planned from eternity, executed by Christ in time, and will be completed at his return when the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14) enter into full possession.

Eternal Life:
"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).
Eternal life begins in grace now — "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14) — and will culminate in perfect knowledge, holiness, and communion with God for ever.

(3) The Ultimate End — The Glory of God

All these gracious purposes converge upon one grand, ultimate design: the glory of God himself.
Since God could swear by none greater, he swore by himself; and since no higher end can be imagined, he has set his own glory as the supreme goal of all his decrees.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Proverbs 16:4).
"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:36).

In election this glory shines most brightly as the glory of his grace (Ephesians 1:4–6).
He chose and predestinated men "to the praise of the glory of his grace," that his free favour might be admired and adored both now and eternally.
His people are formed and called for this very end — "that they should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9; Isaiah 43:21).

And in this decree the glory of divine justice is also displayed.
For the same counsel that appointed salvation through grace also ordained Christ as "a propitiation… to declare [God's] righteousness" (Romans 3:25-26).
Here mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other (Psalm 85:10).
Thus, in the salvation of men, every perfection of God is magnified — his holiness, justice, truth, mercy, and love — and the whole plan of election culminates in the full harmony of his glory.

4. The Blessings That Flow From Election

Finally, the blessings that flow from election are innumerable — in fact, "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3-4).
Election is the pattern and measure according to which every blessing is distributed.
Every link in the golden chain of salvation hangs upon it:

"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans 8:30)

Thus election is the root and fountain from which all grace flows — the first motion of divine love that secures the calling, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and final glorification of all God's people.

The Fruits, Properties, and Defence of Divine Election

1. The Fruits That Flow from Election

The blessings that spring from God's eternal choice are many and precious. They appear in time but were secured in eternity.

(a) Effectual Calling
"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Romans 8:30).
Every person chosen in Christ is, at the appointed time, brought by the Spirit into saving faith. This calling is not accidental, but carried out "according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

(b) Faith and Holiness
Faith, holiness, hope, love, and every other grace of the Spirit are the certain fruits of election. Holiness is both the end and the means appointed in the decree; faith follows as a free gift of grace, and from faith flow every other grace.

(c) Communion with God
"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee" (Psalm 65:4).
The elect are brought near — to know God, to enjoy his presence, to delight in his Word and worship.

(d) Justification
This too springs from election. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33).
Those chosen in Christ are justified in him; their acquittal flows naturally from their union with their chosen Head.

(e) Adoption
The elect were predestinated "unto the adoption of children" (Ephesians 1:5).
They were given to Christ as sons and daughters before the world began — long before his incarnation or their reception of the Spirit of adoption (Hebrews 2:13–14; John 11:52; Galatians 4:6).

(f) Glorification
Finally, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).
They are "vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23),

chosen and called "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14).
That glory, already secured for them, will certainly be enjoyed with Christ for ever.

2. The Properties of Election

From all that has been said, we may gather these settled truths about the nature of election:

It is Eternal.
Election did not begin when a sinner first believed, nor after he had persevered in holiness, but "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

It is Free and Sovereign.
God was under no obligation to choose anyone. He does all things according to his will and for his glory. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy" (Romans 9:18).
The difference between the saved and the lost lies wholly in his sovereign pleasure.

It is Absolute and Unconditional.
No merit, foresight of faith, or human condition moved God to choose. "It is not of works, but of him that calleth" (Romans 9:11).

It is Complete and Perfect.
Election was not begun in eternity and finished in time, nor initiated by God's will and completed by man's.
It was one full, perfect act of the divine will, complete in itself from the beginning.

It is Immutable and Irrevocable.
God never repents of his choice nor reverses it. Human favour changes; divine choice does not. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" (Job 23:13).
Therefore the elect's state is safe and secure for ever.

It is Special and Particular.
The elect are a "peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9) — not a vague class but definite persons, individually known to God and written by name in the

Lamb's book of life.

It May Be Known.
Those chosen of God may discern their election:

by the blessings that accompany it (Romans 8:30);

by the gospel's effect on them in calling and conversion (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5);

by the Spirit's inward witness of adoption (Romans 8:15–16);

and by the outward testimony of a holy life — "making your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

No one can rightly claim to know his election until he is effectually called; that would be presumption.
Nor should any conclude he is a reprobate simply because he is a sinner — for all are sinners by nature, and God's elect were once the same, "children of wrath, even as others."

3. The Common Objections Answered

Some objections are raised against this doctrine, but since Scripture reveals it so plainly — written, as Gill said, "as with a sunbeam" — all objections amount only to quibbles.

Objection 1: God is good to all (Psalm 145:9)
Does not his universal goodness contradict his choosing some and not others?
Answer: The verse speaks of God's providential goodness — his kindness as Creator, feeding and sustaining all creatures.
It does not refer to his saving grace, which is shown only to believers.
Thus Christ said that the Father "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:45); and Paul that he "is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).

Objection 2: Christ came that the world might be saved (John 3:17)
Does not this mean all men without exception?
Answer: No — for all men are not saved. The "world" here means the world

of God's elect scattered among all nations — those whom God was reconciling to himself in Christ, for whom Christ gave his life, "a propitiation for their sins" (1 John 2:2).

Objection 3: God "will have all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4)
If so, how can election stand?
Answer: The text cannot mean every individual, since not all are saved nor even hear the gospel.
The meaning is that God wills the salvation of all kinds of men — both Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, rulers and subjects — which fits the context of Paul's exhortation to pray for all sorts of people (1 Timothy 2:1–7).

Objection 4: God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9)
Surely this denies election?
Answer: The passage refers not to all mankind but to the elect, who in this epistle are addressed as "beloved."
It is God's will that none of those should perish but that all of them should come to repentance — and that will is infallibly accomplished.

4. The Final Word

These and similar objections cannot overturn a truth so clearly revealed throughout Scripture: that God, of his own sovereign will, from all eternity, chose in Christ a people to be holy and happy for ever, "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

And here the doctrine of election rests —
not on human reasoning,
not on foreseen merit,
but on the eternal love, wisdom, and will of Almighty God,
who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Ephesians 1:11)

CHAPTER 3
Of the Decree of Rejection, of Some Angels, and of Some Men

Section I. The Meaning and Scope of Rejection

The term rejection is used here because it is a scriptural expression ascribed to God and conveys the divine act that gives rise to the term reprobate. Scripture speaks of those whom "the Lord hath rejected" (Jeremiah

6:30), describing them as "reprobate silver," and it stands in direct contrast to election (1 Samuel 15:26; 1 Kings 10:24). The word reprobation itself has been so often misunderstood that many recoil at its harsh sound, yet in essence, it bears the same meaning as rejection. The doctrine asserts that God, in His eternal counsel, chose to reject certain angels and men from His special favour. Though seldom mentioned in Scripture, it is nonetheless clearly implied and necessarily inferred from the doctrine of election, since the choice of some implies the passing by of others.

Section II. The Rejection of Some Angels

The decree regarding certain angels involves two parts:

Non-election or Passing By.
Some angels were not chosen. Scripture refers to the others as "elect angels" (1 Timothy 5:21), implying a distinction between those chosen and those not. Both classes were originally contemplated alike in the divine mind—not yet created, not fallen—but as pure potential beings. God determined to create both and to bestow confirming grace upon some while withholding it from others. The elect angels were thus confirmed in holiness and truth, while the rest were left to the mutability of their own will. Having no claim to divine confirmation, they fell by their own choice, losing their first estate (Jude 1:6).

Appointment to Wrath and Judgment.
Those angels who fell were appointed to everlasting punishment: "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4). These chains signify God's immutable decree—iron and brass, unbreakable and eternal. Their darkness is both moral and judicial: a loss of divine light and a state of despair. Their final judgment awaits the great day when saints shall, with Christ, "judge angels" (1 Corinthians 6:3), confirming the righteousness of God's decree.

Section III. The Rejection of Some Men

When this doctrine concerns angels, few object; but when it concerns men, objections rise quickly. This is due only to our nearness to the case. Yet the truth stands: Scripture reveals that while some of Adam's race are elected to life, others are not. If there is a remnant according to the election of grace, then there must also be the rest who are blinded (Romans 11:5–7).

Christ Himself said, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18). Judas, called the "son of perdition" (John 17:12), was chosen to an office but not to salvation. The non-elect are described by negative marks—not known by Christ (Matthew 7:23), not loved as Jacob was loved (Romans 9:13), not given to Christ (John 17:9), and not written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 13:8; 17:8). Their unbelief is evidence of this: "Ye are not of my sheep," said Christ, "therefore ye believe not" (John 10:26).

Section IV. The Two Parts of This Decree

Preterition (Passing By).
This act is God's sovereign decision to pass by some men when choosing others. In this regard, men are viewed not as sinners, but as creatures not yet made or fallen—"the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil" (Romans 9:11). Thus, no injustice is done. God acts as a potter with his clay, making one vessel to honour and another to dishonour (Romans 9:21). This is sometimes called negative reprobation.

Pre-damnation (Appointment to Wrath).
This is God's decree to condemn the ungodly for their sins. "Certain men... were before of old ordained to this condemnation" (Jude 1:4). Their ungodliness, unbelief, and corruption justify this decree. God hardens none by infusing evil but by leaving them to the hardness of their own hearts and denying them the grace that would heal them. As Scripture says, "Whom he will he hardeneth" (Romans 9:18), meaning He leaves them to themselves. Thus, blindness and hardness follow as consequences of non-election, not as its causes (Romans 11:7–10).

Section V. The Causes of the Decree

Efficient Cause – God Himself.
It is God who "hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4). He appoints some to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and this is an act of His absolute sovereignty: He does as He wills in heaven and earth (Daniel 4:35).

Justice of the Decree.
There is no unrighteousness with God (Romans 9:14). In passing by one

and choosing another, He wrongs no one. Those foreordained to punishment are considered sinners, and punishment for sin is a righteous act. The decree is not arbitrary but wise and holy.

Goodness of the Decree.
God's rejection of some does not diminish His goodness; He is free to show mercy where He will (Matthew 20:15). The very existence of salvation for multitudes of fallen men—while none was provided for fallen angels—magnifies divine goodness, not diminishes it.

The Moving Cause.
The reason for this decree is not sin itself, for sin is the cause of damnation but not the cause of God's decree. The decree rests solely on His sovereign will: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matthew 11:26).

The Final Cause.
The ultimate purpose of this decree is God's glory—to show His power and declare His name throughout the earth (Romans 9:17, 22). God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11), but in the manifestation of His justice, holiness, and sovereignty.

Section VI. The Properties of the Decree of Rejection

It is eternal, made before the foundation of the world (Jude 1:4).

It is free and sovereign, depending wholly on God's will (Romans 9:18).

It is immutable, for God's decrees cannot change (Job 23:13).

It concerns particular persons, whose names are omitted from the Book of Life (Revelation 17:8).

It is righteous and holy, as becomes the God of all grace and truth.

Conclusion

The doctrine of rejection, though weighty and solemn, is scripturally grounded and perfectly consistent with the divine attributes. It magnifies God's justice, exalts His sovereignty, and heightens the wonder of His mercy to the elect. As the potter shapes the clay to his design, so the Almighty

orders His creation to the praise of His own glory. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

These books are all available from our website
www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

LET CHRISTIAN MEN BE MEN

David Clarke

Originally published as *The Bierton Crisis* (1984), this deeply personal and theological account traces the journey of David Clarke—minister, church secretary, and committed member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a historic Gospel Standard cause founded in 1832.

This book documents a significant crisis that shook the foundation of the Bierton Church in 1984. As doctrinal errors and questionable practices crept into the fellowship, David stood firm in proclaiming the doctrines of grace—particularly Particular Redemption—and affirmed that the gospel of Christ, not the Law of Moses, is the believer's rule of life. His stance led to a withdrawal of fellowship, yet the church never terminated his membership, desiring his return.

David's testimony not only exposes the theological and ecclesiastical struggles within the church but also chronicles the unexpected closure of the Bierton chapel in 2002, while he was engaged in gospel mission work in the Philippines. Upon returning to the UK, he discovered that a new, unelected group of trustees had taken control of the chapel, denied his rightful membership, and ultimately sold the historic building as a domestic property in

2006.
This book is both a warning and a call: a warning against doctrinal compromise and a call for ministers and believers to ground their faith and practice in Scripture alone—not tradition, not personal opinion, and not the fear of man.
Let Christian Men Be Men is an appeal to return to biblical conviction, gospel clarity, and godly courage—so that men may truly stand, teach, and live as Christ's ambassadors in an age of confusion.

CONVERTED ON LSD TRIP

The Bucks Herald Second Edition

Net Weekly Sales - 23,542

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 11, 1971

CONVERTED ON LSD TRIP

David Clarke who had a three-year career of undetected crime, experienced a "Christian conversion" whilst suffering from the effects of LSD, he told Aylesbury magistrates, on Tuesday. After wrestling with his conscience for a year, he confessed to 24 crimes, and gave information leading to the recovery of over £1000 worth of stolen property. In court

David Could these boys do any real wrong ? Michael

he pleaded guilty to charges of stealing a £300 colour television set from an old peoples home, a £20 spray gun, and a hydraulic jack. He asked for 21 other charges to be taken into consideration, including stealing a builders shed, two cars, and an electric arc welder, two other TV sets, two compressors, and a road trailer. Clarke (21) of Firemore Crescent said that his reputation in the town had been that of a man who was enjoying himself. "I used to sell drugs to young people, and indulge in permissive sex" he declared.

Seeking Truth

"Religion to me was rubbish, and for sissy people who could not stand on their own feet", he said.

"Within my heart I was searching for truth, and a meaning to life". He had good prospects of getting on in life he went on but "I was not satisfied with what I had, I was greedy, selfish and boastful". Clarke had been using pep pills, and marijuana since he was 16 he told the court, but it was after taking LSD that he experienced, what he described as, "a major thing in my life". He described the "torment" he suffered, as a result of taking the drug, and went on "I warn any young person who hears my testimony, "The effects of LSD are so bad, and I warn you to stay clear".

While in this condition he told he, "Called on the name of Jesus" and his torment went from him.

Voice Of Christ

"Jesus Christ spoke to me as clearly as I speak here today saying, 'David, I am with you'" he said. **"What you have been going through is nothing compared to what hell is like"**

Mr Murray, of Manor Crescent Wendover, said he was habitually sceptical of sudden conversions, and preferred to put them to the test of time. The time which had elapsed, since Clarke's profession of faith had convinced him that this young man would now be still and light to society" "He is in truth, a new man, and had experienced what Christ called a second birth". Mercy said Clarke now put himself out to be of assistance, read the bible intensely, always carried a New Testament, attended a wide circle of churches and would spend times in discussion on spiritual things.

Difficulty

Clarke's difficulty during the months spent deciding how to make amends for his past had been the problem of accusing himself, without inflicting too villous...

Continued inside

By David Clarke

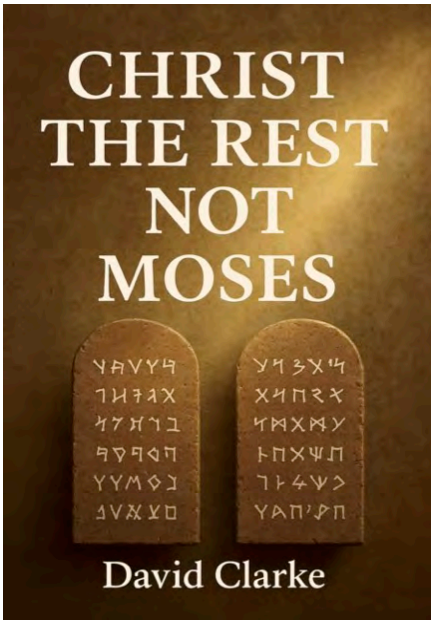
Converted on LSD Trip – A True Story of Crime, Chaos, and a Radical Encounter with Christ
"Jesus Christ had spoken to me and rescued me from a bad LSD trip…"
What happens when a seasoned criminal, immersed in drugs, theft, and rebellion, suddenly claims to have heard the voice of Jesus—right in the middle of an LSD trip?
This is not fiction. It's the raw, unfiltered story of David Clarke.
Converted on LSD Trip is a bold and unforgettable account of a life spiraling into darkness—and the blinding light that shattered it. From stealing cars and dodging the law to confessing 24 crimes and walking free, David's journey shocks, inspires, and challenges the reader to reckon with questions far greater than legal guilt.

For the Christian reader, it's a gripping testimony of God's saving grace and the power of new birth. For the sceptic or seeker, it's a startling invitation to consider whether a man so far gone could really be changed overnight—and if so, by what power?

This 4th edition also recounts the incredible transformation of David's brother, Michael, whose own conversion took place in a Philippine prison cell and sparked a gospel mission among hardened inmates.

Whether you're a believer seeking real stories of redemption or a curious reader exploring the boundaries of faith and human change—Converted on LSD Trip will challenge your assumptions, stir your spirit, and leave you wondering: could this be true… and what would it mean for me?

CHRIST THE REST NOT MOSES



Discover the true rest for the people of God—found not in Moses, but in Christ.

In this powerful and deeply personal theological work, David Clarke, author of Converted on LSD Trip, challenges long-held traditions about the Sabbath, the Law of Moses, and the believer's walk in Christ. Writing from conviction and experience, Clarke defends the truth of justification by faith alone and exposes the dangers of legalism in the church today.

Drawing on Scripture, Reformers like Calvin and Luther, and his own exclu-

sion from Gospel Standard churches, Clarke contends that the believer's rest is not found in the ceremonial Sabbath or observance of the Mosaic Law, but in Christ Himself. With careful exposition of Hebrews 4 and support from historical theologians, this book is both an appeal to grace and a call to theological reformation.

Inside you'll find:

A biblical argument for Christ as the true Sabbath rest

Historical insights from Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, Wycliffe, and others

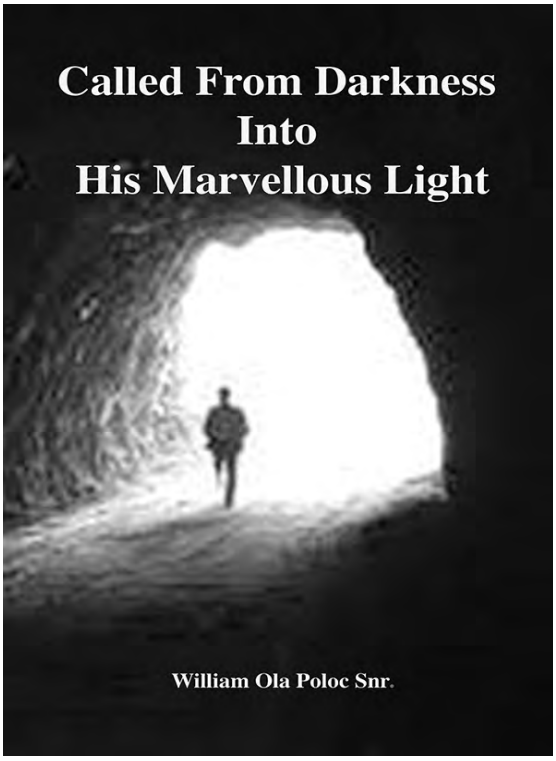
Letters and first-hand accounts revealing how doctrinal differences can divide fellowship

A pastoral call to rest in the finished work of Christ—not in outward rituals

Whether you're a believer wrestling with law and grace, a student of Reformed theology, or someone seeking deeper understanding of your faith, Christ the Rest, Not Moses offers clarity, challenge, and comfort.

"This is not merely a theological matter — it is a matter of peace, of liberty, and of standing firm in the grace wherein we are called."

CALLED FROM DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT



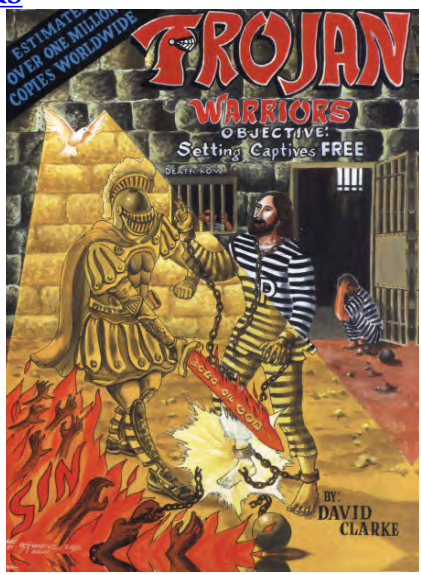
PUBLISHER PREFACE

William Poloc was a prisoner in New Bilibid Prison and served a period of 14 years for a crime of homicide. During his imprisonment he was called by the Lord Jesus to follow him and he turned his back on his criminal past. He read the bible and studied theology and he learned and understood the doctrines of grace and became a teacher of the gospel.

I met William in New Bilibid Prison, in October 2001, as I was the Director of a Christian Mission called Trojan Horse International. In August 2002 William was released from prison and Trojan Horse International commissioned and sent William, on his release to go to his home city in Baguio and preach the Gospel to inmates of Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail. In October, 2002 I visited Baguio City Jail, as the mission director and a sent minister of Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists, and baptized 22 inmates, who had been converted from crime to Christ, through the ministry of William Poloc. I also baptized 8 souls in Benguet Provincial jail who too had been converted from crime to Christ, though the ministry of William Poloc. These events took place was at the same time that the Bierton Strict Baptist

Chapel held its last worship service, in the United Kingdom, which was on the 22nd December. 2002.
William, as his testimony will tell, has worked these past 20 years preaching and teaching the gospel and founded Baguio Christ's Centre Churches. And we praise God for being able to tell of the wonderful works of God in saving sinners, in and though faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

TROJAN WARRIORS



Setting Captives Free
Trojan Warriors: A True Story of Redemption Behind Bars

By David and Michael Clarke

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony..." — Revelation 12:11

Trojan Warriors is an extraordinary true story of transformation, injustice, and divine redemption inside one of the most feared prisons in the Far East—New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines.
When British national Michael Clarke was sentenced to 16 years for a crime he insists he did not commit, it seemed like the end. But behind bars, a surprising mission was born—one that would shake the gates of hell and bring light to some of the darkest corners of human experience. His brother David Clarke, once a convicted criminal turned Christian minister, answers the

call to rescue not just Michael, but countless others trapped in despair. This gripping account chronicles the spiritual revival that swept through hardened criminals—murderers, drug lords, and death row inmates—transforming them into passionate witnesses for Christ. These "Trojan Warriors," many facing execution, found freedom not in escape but in the gospel. Their raw and powerful testimonies are recorded here—over sixty life-changing stories of men who turned from crime to Christ.

Part exposé, part spiritual awakening, Trojan Warriors also tackles the injustice and corruption within legal systems, the power of forgiveness, and the triumph of faith over fear.

This book is for:

Readers seeking true stories of hope, faith, and redemption

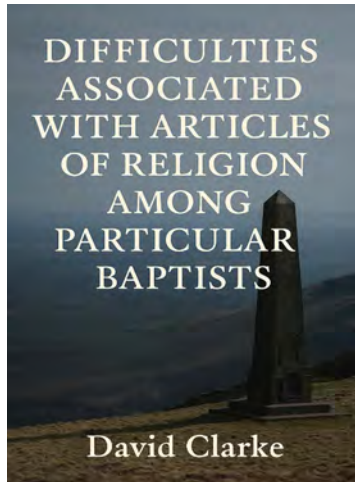
Those interested in prison reform and spiritual transformation

Anyone who believes no life is beyond the reach of grace

Prepare to be challenged, moved, and inspired.

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION

Among Particular Baptists



David Clarke

Difficulties Associated with Articles of Religion among Particular Baptists
This work offers a critical examination of the historical and ecclesiastical implications of confessional subscription within the Particular Baptist tradition. Rooted in the author's lived experience, Difficulties Associated with Articles of Religion among Particular Baptists presents a first-hand account of the theological and pastoral tensions that arise when rigid subscription to inherited Articles of Religion is required for church membership.
David Clarke, converted from a life of crime in 1970 and later received into the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church in 1976, explores the doctrinal conflicts he encountered—particularly with ambiguous, outdated, or extrabiblical formulations. The book surveys and contrasts four significant Baptist confessions:

The First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1646, 2nd ed.)

The Second London Baptist Confession (1689)

The Bierton Particular Baptist Articles of Religion (1831)

The Gospel Standard Articles (1878), including later additions
Clarke argues that, while confessions serve a vital role in defining orthodoxy and guarding against error, they may also hinder genuine fellowship and spiritual growth when employed without discernment or allowance for indi-

vidual conscience. Drawing attention to unresolved tensions within the Particular Baptist heritage—especially around duty faith, the law, and church polity—this study calls for a reevaluation of how churches apply confessional standards today.

Part theological inquiry, part ecclesiastical memoir, this volume is both a historical document and a pastoral appeal to return to Scripture as the supreme authority in faith and practice. It is particularly relevant for pastors, elders, theologians, and students of Baptist ecclesiology.

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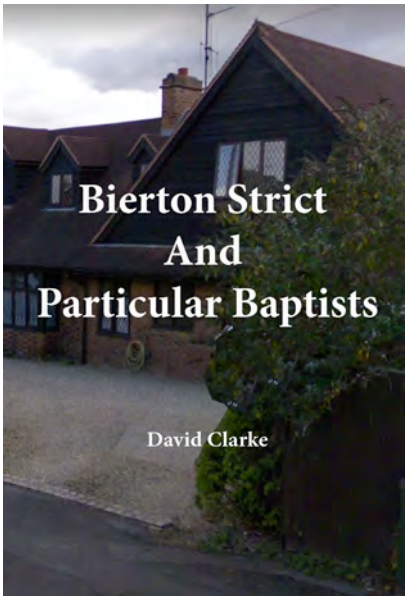
BIERTON STRICT AND PARTICULAR BAPTISTS



Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert. Ed

Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist is the compelling personal and theological account of David Clarke, a former criminal turned preacher, who was graciously called by God to faith in Jesus Christ in 1970. Set in Aylesbury, England, this autobiographical work traces Clarke's remarkable journey from a life of rebellion to becoming a member and minister of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church.

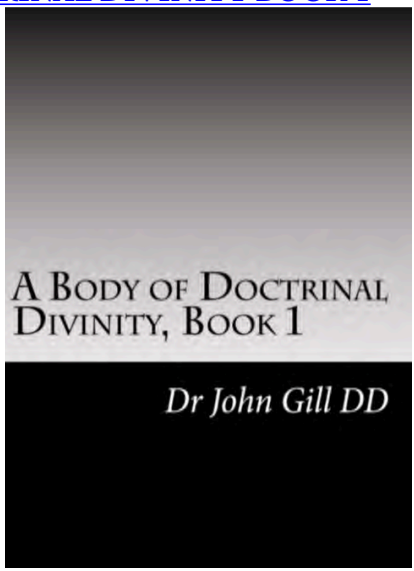
This book not only recounts his dramatic conversion but also explores the doctrinal convictions and ecclesiastical challenges he faced within a small, historic Reformed Baptist community. Clarke provides an insider's perspective on the intricacies of Strict and Particular Baptist beliefs—especially concerning predestination, closed communion, and church governance—while grappling with personal conflict, ecclesial discipline, and the eventual closure of the Bierton chapel.

Through letters, personal reflections, and theological commentary, this book becomes more than a memoir. It is a testimony to the power of sovereign grace, a study in Christian perseverance, and an invitation to consider the weight of truth in matters of faith and conscience.

Whether you're drawn by curiosity about Strict and Particular Baptists or intrigued by a life radically transformed by Christ, Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist offers a unique blend of spiritual depth, historical insight, and

personal honesty.

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY BOOK 1



A System of Practical Truths

Authored by Dr John Gill DD,

Book Store :A Body of Doctrinal Divinity Book 1

THIS IS BOOK 1

Treating The Subjects:

Of God, His Works, Names, Nature, Perfections And Persons. And Contains:

Chapters

1 Of The Being Of God
2 Of The Holy Scriptures
3 Of The Names Of God
4 Of The Nature Of God
5 Of The Attributes Of God In General, And Of His Immutability In Particular.
6 Of The Infinity Of God,
7 Of The Life Of God.
8 Of The Omnipotence Of God.
9 Of The Omniscience Of God.
10 Of The Wisdom Of God.
11 Of The Will Of God And The Sovereignty Of It
12 Of The Love Of God
13 Of The Grace Of God.

14 Of The Mercy Of God.
15 Of The Long suffering Of God.
16 Of The Goodness Of God.
17 Of The Anger And Wrath Of God.
18 Of The Hatred Of God.
19 Of The Joy Of God.
20 Of The Holiness Of God.
21 Of The Justice Or Righteousness Of God.
22 Of The Veracity Of God.
23 Of The Faithfulness Of God
24 Of The Sufficiency And Perfection Of God.
25 Of The Blessedness Of God.
26 Of The Unity Of God.
27 Of A Plurality In The Godhead, Or, A Trinity Of Persons In The Unity Of The Divine Essence.
28 Of The Personal Relations; Or, Relative
Properties, Which Distinguish The Three Divine Persons In The Deity.
29 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Father.
30 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Son.
31 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Holy Spirit.

MARY, MARY QUITE CONTRARY

Second Edition: Does The Lord Jesus Want Women To Rule As Elders In His Church ? ?

When treating the subject of women elders in the church we are not dealing with the affairs of a secular society and so it has nothing to do with women's rights, equality of sex or race in the world. This matter only relates to men and women in a Christian church. It is about the rules of the house of God, which is the church of the living God and rules for those who are members of the body of Christ and members of an heavenly county.

The Suffragettes

Emmeline Pankhurst 1858 -1928) was a Suffragette and worked very hard to bring equal rights for women to vote as men. In the year of her death all women over 21 gained the right to vote. The Suffragette movement brought about many changes for the better in a secular society but not so for women seeking to follow Christian principles. One of her famous quotes was, "Trust in God She shall provide". Terms which do not reflect Christian beliefs. We know God will provide and He is not a she.

In the USA and the UK, women's political rights were brought into general political consciousness by the suffragettes and since then there have been legal rights granted to the Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, same sex marriages, along with the development of the feminist movement and the appointment of persons from the LBGT community to responsible positions in the Church of England. All of this has caused conflict in the Christian community due to differences beliefs of right and wrong.

This book seeks to show what the bible has to say about the role of women in the church and family. Since these rules are taught by the Apostles of Christ they are the word of God to us and we should obey. The secular world may differ and turn from the narrow path taught in scripture but we should follow the word of God, this is our wisdom.